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American Poems  
and Others



# Works by J. C. Squire

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TRICKS OF THE TRADE

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THE COLLECTED POEMS OF JAMES ELROY FLECKER :

Edited, with an Introduction

SELECTIONS FROM MODERN POETS

*The above are all published by Hodder and Stoughton with the exception of "Flecker's Poems" and "Selections from Modern Poets" (Secker), and "The Survival of the Fittest" (Allen and Unwin).*

# American Poems and Others

By J. C. Squire

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TO  
THOMAS HARDY



## PREFATORY NOTE

WITH the exception of "The World : 1918," all these poems were written in the years 1921 and 1922. Some of them have been published in *The Challenge*, *The Outlook*, *Outward Bound*, *The London Mercury*, and *The Weekly Westminster Gazette*.

J. C. S.





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## APPROACHING AMERICA

CAME first, five hundred miles from port  
A perching bird of homely sort,  
And next in tumbling waters grey  
Nantucket's gallant lightship lay  
Rocking, lonely, small and black,  
A moment's friend upon the track.

And then at night from shores unseen  
Shone sparsely scattered lights serene,  
Sweet tokens after all the days  
Shifting and void of the sea's ways :  
We watched past midnight to divine  
The incredible shore's uncertain line ;

Then, very wakeful, went below  
Thrilled a new continent to know,  
Long talked about in commonplace,  
Now a strange planet reach'd through space ;  
We drained the flask we dared not keep  
And laughed and talked ourselves to sleep.

Chill dawn ; and through the porthole's glass  
Firm-circled by its ring of brass,  
A smoother sea, a warming fold  
Of woods, browned with a year grown old :  
The coast-line of an English shire  
And in the midst a cosy spire.

Solent and Staten Island, these  
Greet sisterly across the seas,  
And in confederate kindness spread  
For every stranger newly sped  
From either to the other shore  
Scenes he has known and loved before.

. . . . .

Anchored we waited. The ship stirred.  
The shore went past. O dawning word  
That filled our souls with silent awe !  
Lovely things from heaven we saw,  
Over the waters far up stream  
Sublime companions of a dream :

A fair phantasmal company  
Of goddesses in the morning sky,  
Concourse serene of starry powers  
Musing on other worlds than ours !  
The water sparkled : the sun shone :  
Mysteriously they were gone.

Gone : in their places fixt appearing  
A mass of buildings, heightening, nearing,  
A noble group fit for a great  
New hemisphere's majestic gate,  
Till as we slowly steamed ahead  
In straggling line the cluster spread.



Each up its slice of skyway goes,  
Windows in thousand chessboard rows ;  
Pointed and lean and broad and blunt  
Behind the rusty water-front,  
In random rivalry they climb  
The oddest pinnacles of Time.

## AUTUMN : OUTSKIRTS OF WASHINGTON

THE avenues of Washington  
Glide out until the houses end,  
The villas end, the tracks go on  
Empty and straight, climb and descend  
Smoothly by fairy dells and brakes  
Scattered with copses all half grown  
That glance at little delicate lakes :  
Until they fade in hills unknown.

And autumn like an angel there  
Scatters fair hues on fragile trees ;  
Crimson and brown are not the wear,  
But paler tints more rare than these :  
Branches of coral spray the glade,  
Wands of lemon and golden green :  
Young maiden trees with scarce a shade  
Spread lacelike in the tranquil scene.

It seems unreal : a world of youth,  
So new and innocently gay,  
The mind will scarce accept the truth  
This land was not made yesterday, .  
That through those years of Asia's kings  
Or ever Greece was glorified,  
Here also flowered all the springs,  
Here all the autumns burned and died.



## NIAGARA

THE wide desolate river, the low bare shore,  
Rocks and hurrying waters and far ahead  
A mist that joins the flat grey sky outspread  
To the grey vague end of the waters; the distant roar  
That swells to thunder, the rush of the waves in-  
creasing,  
The trees of Goat Island growing higher, till sudden  
are seen  
Huge walls of the falls plunging down to the battered  
ravine,  
Avalanches of wheeling water unceasing.

The foot of the falls : the slippery rounds of rock ;  
The dark small earth, the crumpled rim of the sky,  
The curling ruining columns that crash from on high  
To the cloudy chasms with wild reiterate shock,  
Hissing and hurrying cliffs of foam down-pouring :  
Aloft, one curve like marble with smooth green face,  
An awful illusion of stillness in the race  
Of eternal Niagara louder and louder roaring.

Niagara, agara, agara, down the valley,  
From the dragging drowning might of it went I away,  
From the moving thunderous walls and the gulfs of  
    spray  
By a chaos of waters that eddy and rush and rally,  
By the fortress flanks of the town of Niagara Falls,  
That blackened and grim on the foaming tumult  
    frown  
And westward to quieter tracks where the stream  
    deep down  
Runs small in the cleft of its narrowing tree-clad  
    walls.

These gullies and bluffs and the rapids far below,  
That giant's din from beyond, the scrub and the grass,  
They were all as they are when a savage's foot would  
    pass  
Once in a month those centuries ago.  
Will it come, the day of deserted stones crumbling  
Under the sky, when a hunting savage again  
Will pass not caring from whom were the stones that  
    remain,  
Only hearing the noise of the fall's tumbling ?

America empty again, and beasts astray,  
The forests growing again, the cities gone,  
Fall'n, moss'd over, Niagara sounding on,  
In a region where stilled are the voices of all our day ;  
Not a house, not a fence or field from the lake to the  
ocean,  
No chimneys on the horizon, no smoke-trails hovering,  
Only brushwood and grass, spreading and covering  
The broken proofs of our race's old devotion.

## THE STOCKYARD

*(To Robert Frost)*

### I

*DID you go at all to Chicago?*

We came to Chicago over the wide plain,  
Travelling all a day on the Illinois plain,  
Dappled with distant woodlands and cosy farms.  
And the weather as time went on grew constantly  
colder  
And wetter ; and we got there at night in a storm.

*Did it clear next day?*

It was cold and snowed a little,  
But we moved about and saw what we went to see.



*And what did you go to see ?*

The University,  
A football match, the lake, some Chicago people,  
A play at the Opera . . .

*You did not go to the Stockyards ?*

We went to a Stockyard.  
We spent a morning there.

*I should not have thought it. How could you ? What  
was it like ?  
Was there cruelty ?*

I should not say so, nothing so human.  
I will tell you. Keep still, if you really want to know.

It was cushioned and warm in the car,  
 And I had a cigar ;  
 But icy outside. A few  
 Thin snowflakes fell through the air or flew  
 When a small gust blew.  
 They spotted the rapid diverging lines  
 Of buildings, waste-spaces, heaps  
 Like the litter at tops of mines,  
 Scabrous cottages, dirty forlorn little shops,  
 Railroad crossings, canals and telegraph posts. . . .  
 I watched till monotony tired me,  
 Then sank away, staring only  
 At the driver's back and the featureless grey of the  
     sky.

But at last we stopped at a place  
 Of dingy yards with towering buildings behind,  
 And backed and turned down a lane between high  
     walls,  
 Where bumping or halted by doorways

We passed loaded wagons, and horses  
Who knew not what service they did there  
Plodding in the purlieus of slaughter.  
And I thought as I looked about me  
Was it truth when I called it a duty  
That a man who ate flesh should come out here,  
Being answerable for all that is done here  
In this place that I dread to approach ?

We came to a yard and the door of a great new  
building  
Square and clean ; and up in a lift, and into  
A spacious hall and rows of small clerks receding,  
At rows of desks, girls and their typewriters,  
Inkstands, ledgers, and cords of electric lights ;  
And then to a neat little office with pictures and  
carpet  
Where a little old man awaited us, smiling and  
shrewd,  
A man with a close white beard and twinkling eyes.  
He was witty and kind, he cracked us a few little  
jokes

About mixing up men with beasts, and the need of  
guides ;

So he rang for guides, and two tidy young men came  
and fetched us

And we picked up our hats and sticks and walked  
downstairs :

And I heard at my ear in a quiet sad voice

A sad reproach that I could not answer :

“ You have come to see the filthiest thing in the  
world :

Why have you come to a thing so loathsome,

To ask trite questions and act indifference

As now you are doing before you have started

To stroll through the filthiest place in the world ? ”

So we stepped out into the cold,

And walked in pairs, wincing at wind and sleet,

Through gates, across gravel, and then to a range of  
buildings.

The explanations began, my guide talked profusely,

I professed an interest. But my heart was unquiet,  
afraid,



Trembling with fear at the expectation of strangeness,

Pledged to encounter something I could not guess :  
What people ? What duties ? What infamies done  
in the light

Yet hid from the world ? . . . Who but a fool  
would come ?

Would I go away now if I could ? . . . But now  
was too late,

The threshold was crossed at the lowest plank of a  
stairway

Rising outside a high wall. Came a whiff of the sty.  
We climbed to a gallery running along outside  
A windowless wooden loft. They were here for a  
day,

The hogs who would die to-morrow. They were  
through that wall.

We must pass, for we did not come to see feeding  
hogs. . . .

Yet I could not help but linger and peep through a  
crack :

And there in a filtered light they were scattered  
about,

Scores of squat steadfast hogs, snouting at roots,  
Arrived that day with only a day's respite,  
Fattening after a journey, contentedly grunting,  
At the rest and the space and the food. . . . No  
notice would *they* take

Of the new tall sides of the sty, the numerous company.

Yet I looked at them full of fear and awe :  
Not pigs did I see but Life in a doom-filled place,  
All things and their destiny, not to be understood,  
Till my name in a courteous voice broke into my  
trance :

“ We have only an hour and a half : there is much  
to see.”

The gallery led to a door and we left the sky  
And stood among beams by a flat revolving drum.  
Pigs slung by the hinder feet went round with that  
drum  
Squealing, and when they had soared and drooped  
again

A man with a rhythmical knife let blood from their  
throats,  
And they passed down the shed on an endless chain,  
smoothly,  
At regular intervals, pig after pig after pig,  
Hung downwards, slate-coloured, pouring blood,  
to vanish  
Through a door. The smell came hot and enveloped  
us round,  
I dared not look at the others. I held my breath,  
Breathed through my mouth, thought about other  
things . . .  
I had to walk slowly and could not ask to go back.

A sound of perpetual scraping, a warm wet stench . . .  
And then, still steaming, moved evenly into a hall  
A line of pinkish-white pigs, atrociously naked,  
Their unders gashed with a wound from tail to head,  
Suspended parallel, a quivering pattern of trunks  
And dangling snouts and smooth flapping pointed  
ears,  
A shifting geometrical maze of bodies

That trembled when turning the corners. Men stood  
at their posts  
Jabbing and slicing and plucking. The file moved  
slowly,  
And evenly opposite, over against the chain,  
A belt flowed on with tight little heaps that were  
entrails,  
The gaping body above, the entrails below it,  
Each pile gliding in line with the belly that owned it,  
Till it came in the middle to the front of a blue-  
smocked figure,  
Who worked with his fingers, who dipped and peered  
and dipped  
In time like a clock, a man who would stand all a day,  
All a year, all a life, groping and peering in entrails  
Watching for something there that would mean dis-  
ease . . .  
I remember : a negro : he'd an armlet " U.S. In-  
specter."

Somewhere the heads went off : when we next stood  
still



In a narrow high passage, half-hogs came tumbling  
outward

To the top of an inclined plane of wood, slid down  
And stuck at the base a second to be smitten in two.  
A dark young man with an axe was standing there,  
Lean-waisted, strong-armed ; one fancied a mask  
like a headsman's.

He waited, axe downwards, his eyes looking at us  
and through us,

His mouth was firm, chin square, he'd a slight dark  
moustache :

Slavonic perhaps. There was pride and contempt in  
his eyes,

And nothing else lived in his face to show what he  
thought.

A carcass rushed down ; his hands went steadily  
upwards,

Then down flew the axe and severed it clean between  
bones,

To tumble down funnels. . . . I answered ashamed  
his gaze

As he stood, imperious, erect, his eyes looking  
forward,

Axe at rest, straight down from his forearm, a waiting  
headsman,  
A figure from allegory, a symbol of Doom.

And beyond were cool chambers where browning  
hogs of the past  
Hung quiet in lines that dwindled away in the distance  
In twilight and fume, being cured. The blood was  
behind us,  
The corridors now were steely and bare, and at last  
We came to light and the human ; in a varnished  
room  
Hams slid in and were placed in paper wrappers,  
Packed and sealed by pretty aproned girls,  
Dainty and clean like nursery-rhyme dairymaids ;  
And a clock marked noon as we watched, and they  
all broke off,  
And two of them put their arms round each other's  
waists,  
And went tripping upstairs to their meal, whispering  
and laughing ;

All under the one vast roof with the knives and the  
steam.

They were hurrying outside in the grey cold yards,  
Men and women with anxious faces,  
Crossing the yard, hurrying for dinner. . . .  
But there was no rest in that place from continuous  
killing,  
The work with the sheep and the cattle went clanking  
on,  
And we threaded the bleak-faced crowd to go on with  
our day. . . .  
A sawdusty room, very clean, surrounded with meat,  
Where dealers would come, but none as yet were  
there ;  
Cool stores of pieces all still in a blue half-light ;  
And then a glimpse of the sheep-sheds : an open  
door  
And a flock huddling in, led by a trotting goat  
Trained to betray those simpletons ; woolly backs  
Jammed in the pen, and further, a struggling sheep

Hauled through, and another, then dangling bodies  
and chains . . .

We passed through a place where a row of throat-  
cut calves

Hung downwards, their muzzles and tongues drip-  
ping blood to the floor :

One of them started to kick like a marionette :

We glanced and went on to the largest shed of all.

So at last we stood

In an old black gallery whose wood was dewy with  
death,

Old death soaked in. Across, there were bullocks  
entering

From the light to the dimness, patient. Were they  
conscious of death ?

Did they wonder what this was to which they were  
brought in a herd

Of strange companions, these fields with no pools,  
no trees,

No grass on the ground, no gentle light from above,

No leisure to kneel and sleep ? They were strangely  
silent ;

But once from them came most quiet and pitiful  
A brief little lowing, a little plaintive moo,  
Like a question that got no answer. There was not  
another,

No sound but the shuffling of bodies as we sauntered  
around

And halted above them and gazed right down on  
their backs.

They stood there stolid like prisoners under a guard,  
And were pushed one by one to their end. For be-  
yond a partition

We moved, and could see, directly below us, two men  
Half screened by the shadows, and one had a hammer  
he swung.

The bullock came in and waited, staring ahead,  
The hammer leapt down on his head with a loud  
smack,

And the beast collapsed and crumpled along the  
ground

To be hooked and slung and raised and swung for  
the slitting.



But some I saw that, dazed, fell to their knees  
And needed a second blow, and one  
That came to its knees and looked with uplifted head,  
Bewildered, appealing, as against a dread mistake,  
And the loud crack drove it down, and it lay like the  
rest,  
And went off like the rest in the gloom and another  
one came,  
And another, another, and passed to the high dark  
hall,  
Where great carcasses slowly moved, or were held  
by men  
With plunging arms, who slashed and stripped and  
clove.  
They were dabbled with blood, the place was all  
painted with blood,  
Splashings and drippings and clots ; blood trickled  
to the gutters  
Specked with white fragments of flesh. In the open  
space  
Of the middle men padded about in the dark red  
slime  
Of a flat floor paved with blood. . . .

Dazzled and sick I passed into the light,  
Down steps, along scaffoldings, moving with the  
others,  
Crossing the firm's museum where they preserve  
Relics of the founder's humble beginnings,  
A rude machine and photographs of a shop.  
I talked and smiled with effort, wishing for solitude  
In an air heavy with the neighbourhood of death ;  
At moments marching mechanically, empty and  
vague,  
Till the thought came back again, dizzying, fright-  
ening,  
That within those pale insubstantial walls of brick  
The wheels of death were grinding, death at each  
stroke,  
Life pouring down a shoot to the dark Pit,  
A manufacture of death. And when we were parting,  
Shaking hands in the bright white carpeted office  
Thanking our host, while floated through the partition  
The muted multitudinous tapping of typewriters,  
Everything swam before me, I felt like falling,  
I saw again that antechamber of slaughter,  
And heard the timid lowing of that poor beast. . . .

A varied day, many people, chat about books,  
Journeys, sight-seeing, shops. In pauses outdoors,  
In streets and courts, at the edge of the ruffled grey  
lake,  
My nostrils were suddenly filled with a scent from  
the suburbs,  
A sickening, pungent, invisible reek blowing in  
Over miles of roofs. I set my teeth to my retching,  
And told myself, " It is only wood-smoke from the  
curing,  
It gets in your clothes in those vaults with the files  
of hams,  
Or even if not, if it blows, it is only wood-smoke."  
But a whisper came, " No, not smoke ; it's the scent  
of death,  
The odour of death that hangs always over Chicago.  
Chicago lives always in the breath from the caverns  
of Death,  
And her people walk always, knowing it, trying to  
forget it ;  
Buying and selling and playing, fringed by that  
horror,  
They smell it and do not speak."

But at night in the Opera  
We sat in a box surrounded by pensive faces,  
Soft hair, glinting jewels, silks, white elbows on  
velvet,  
Curving around in an arc. There were rows below  
Of bare-armed women and quiet white-fronted  
men,  
And far above us, mounting in tiers to the roof,  
A slope, thick-speckled with faces. The lights went  
down,  
The people glimmered in shadow all silent, watching  
The enchanted gold of the stage, cut square in the  
darkness.  
They saw a pageant of white-cowled monks who  
chanted,  
Feigned worship and grief, a woman dressed as a  
boy ;  
They were fired and lifted, comforted, saddened,  
delighted,  
By chains of pearly song, deep organ-like choruses. .  
Across that circle of thousands  
At the summit of civilisation  
In a pause of the wandering music

Like the boding voice of disaster  
I heard a desolate lowing.  
They were happy in song and colour,  
Flushed and tender and yearning :  
But wanning the air a cloud came over,  
A poisonous breath that choked my nostrils.

We talked. The lights went up, then down for a  
ballet.

In the lovely fairyland world of the stage,  
A shepherdess sweetly beribboned  
Drooped sighing by a faltering fountain  
That sprayed and sobbed in the twilight,  
Circled by dark-green bushes  
And the pedestalled heads of fauns ;  
And a ring of shepherds came leaping,  
Brown-limbed, in a noiseless motion,  
Joining hands and dividing and joining again  
To delicate minglings of music. . . .  
O harp and horn and Arcadian pipe !  
Again from the marshes of blood beyond  
It stole to me, chilling my spirit,



The inveterate miasma of death,  
A presence drifting as only I knew  
Over all that gaiety, sensibility,  
Refinement, innocent playing with toys.  
And I thought no longer of only Chicago  
But of all our haunted race and its world.  
The auditorium was rent like a veil  
And I saw in a chasm of infinite darkness  
Killing, devouring, and charnel smoking,  
Writhing, flames and a rain of blood,  
The faceless phantoms of Baal and Moloch . . .  
Till it closed and again I resumed my life.

## THE UNVISITED

WHAT was there there beyond that farthest  
train,

Day beyond day the gentle wavelike plain,  
Deserts and deep canyons and silent forests  
Climbing to snowy peaks without a stain.

Groves of great fruits and towers built of old,  
Vine-terraced hills and crystal streams and gold,  
Soft-fronded palms, blue seas and golden beaches  
That murmuring fringes of white foam enfold.

Dream-prairies spread with flowers that never grew,  
And breezes balmier than ever blew,  
A fiercer wilderness and mightier mountains  
And deeper woods than traveller ever knew,

And mellowe fruits and bluer lovelier bays  
And warmer starrier nights and idler days,  
No pain, no cruelty and no unkindness,  
Peace and content and love that always stays.

## ANOTHER GENERATION

THERE is a woman like a seed,  
    There is a man in embryo,  
Whose spirits, faces, sex indeed  
    Their very mothers do not know.

Only their being is revealed.  
    They are : all else is hid in gloom,  
Fixt by authority, but sealed  
    Deep in the future and the womb.

Yet they are foreordained to be  
    One female, and the other male,  
And they will come the light to see,  
    And suck, and bite their fists, and wail,

And grow through childhood wondering still  
At all the beauties of the earth,  
And learn the exercise of will,  
Mercy and truth and tears and mirth.

Season of youth ! they'll live with joy  
Through all our careless days of old,  
Yet leave behind the girl and boy,  
Their dearest secrets still untold.

Separate still, they will not meet,  
Though Life be light, unsatisfied,  
Not finding any, wise or sweet,  
The born companions of their pride,

Till destiny disguised as chance  
Pricks out the hour with silver pin,  
Decrees a dinner or a dance,  
A house, a garden or an inn,



Where they'll be left alone a space,  
Strangers, and talk ; and she will find  
Him like herself, and he her face  
The language of a perfect mind.

And once again with all the rest  
They'll come together, and friends depart,  
Congeniality confessed,  
Each with a trouble at the heart.

And one more day and they will know  
A final wound, they are struck by love,  
The god at last has drawn his bow,  
And sent a shaft that will not move ;

And he a whole night long will wake  
Abased and helpless, framing speech,  
Made desperate by his heart's fierce ache  
To ask a thing beyond his reach,

And she all trembling in her bed  
Will search his strangeness, yearn and weep,  
Loving him, filled with virgin dread,  
And see the dawn, and find no sleep,

And pressed by thunder they will rise,  
And when a few more hours have gone,  
Her burning cheek and languid eyes  
Will tell him all his war is won.

Ah, but I know their months of bliss,  
Their happy silence, happy talk,  
How they will roam and pause and kiss,  
Confess, discover, while they walk ;

How they will stand by stream and lake,  
And go, as though exchanging sight,  
Through bluebell wood and primrose brake  
Finding in all a new delight ;

And watch the sunset from a gate,  
And see the evening fade, and then  
All of a sudden learn to hate  
The evil that is done by men. . . .

So they will mate, and they will get  
A wondrous child, and several more,  
The prettiest, strongest, gayest set  
That mortal mother ever bore,

And love to watch this brood of theirs  
Grow up, though they grow older too,  
And laugh to find their first grey hairs  
Since there is nothing else to do. . . .

Each thought you guard, each pulse of mine  
Will wake in them, but they not guess  
We shared of old the immortal wine  
Of their delight and their distress,

Who, beyond question, also were  
    Wisest of all the race of Man,  
One only comprehending pair,  
    Unique, since first the world began.

## AN EPITAPH

SHIFTLESS and shy, gentle and kind and  
frail,

Poor wanderer, bewildered into vice,  
You are freed at last from seas you could not sail,  
A wreck upon the shores of Paradise.



## THE LOVER COMFORTS HIMSELF

THIS pain will pass  
As other pains have past,  
And she'll be kind again  
As she once was kind.  
'Tis but to wait,  
Loving and patient still,  
Only a space to keep  
A constant mind.

How could she know  
Her coldness hurt so much ?  
She went before she heard  
My fault confessed.  
If she could see  
This moment all my thoughts  
She'd blame herself and fly  
To bring me rest.

She is so sweet,  
So generous and just,  
It could not have been she,  
'Twas I was wrong :  
O would she come !  
O, if through night's soft air  
Her tender heart, awake,  
Could hear my song !

## A LONDON SUNSET

**I**N fragments visible, enmeshed low down,  
The sun is behind the trees, the trees are dark,  
Against the dazzle of gold, which fades away  
To an upper sky of pale crystalline blue.  
This side of the trees the garden's already dark  
But, scattered around, take on the lingering light  
Roofs and chimney-pots, soft, mellow, serene.

There's a late bird going songless, intent, across,  
High over all things here.

O peaceful hour,  
I forget my body, I seem to be one with the sky,  
A note in the chord of a beautiful ending thing.  
Alone but not unhappy : not even alone,  
For over this vast city so strangely hushed,  
In high rooms, or standing at staircase windows,  
On the summits of roads, or leaning on gates in the  
suburbs,

Are lovers, with fingers touching, who look at the  
west,

And wondering boys and meditative old men,  
Everywhere fixed a few, in suspended life,  
Watching the last of the sun fade from the sky,  
At peace with the same celestial dream as I.

## FROM A WINDOW

SUMMER'S invaded springtime. It is hot,  
Hot and still as in August, the sky pure blue.

I lean upon my window-sill and watch  
My peaceful road, my little world, from above.  
Life quietly sings to every cradled sense.

The pageant of Life is a lazy pleasant show :  
The soothing whirr of a passing bicycle,  
The brass of milkcans glittering in the sun,  
Thick dust, and the idle window-box below,  
Holding one pink and one blue hyacinth.



The dust sleeps, the river silently shines,  
The leaves stir and are still ; through the wall I hear  
Faint tinklings of a pianist ; yesterday  
I noticed the old lady'd drawn her blinds  
At River Cottage. She has carpets there,  
Woolwork, mahogany, a parrot on a perch,  
Glass, china, prisms, and clocks with shepherdesses,  
All still now in the golden diffused light.  
It is warm there, but she cannot see the dust.

Now could I live in negro idleness. . . .

*“ O cease ! must hate and death return ?*

*Cease ! must men kill and die ? ”*

## THE JOURNEY

I TOOK the train a whole day long  
To see that girl again ;  
When sunset died, in a bare country,  
I stepped from an empty train,

And walked for miles by a hedgeless track  
Hushed in evening's air,  
Till I came to the place where she lived with her  
father,  
And entered and found her there :

A quiet woman in flowered muslin  
In a lamp's homely ray,  
Pale, dark-haired, gliding and bending  
Where the palsied figure lay.

Her eyes remembered, but now she was busy,  
I stood in the shadows long,  
Till at last the old man was taken to sleep  
And she gave him a kiss like a song.

And freed at last, she whispered me out,  
And we walked over slopes of turf,  
That came to the scent of the salt sea  
And the sighing of slow surf.

And there we leaned to the night's dark sea  
Over a grass-topped wall,  
My hand just touching her cool arm,  
Saying nothing at all.

TO A ROMAN

I

**Y**OU died two thousand years ago, Catullus,  
Myriads since then have walked the earth  
you knew  
All their long lives and faded into nothing,  
And still across that waste men think of you.

You loved your Sirmio, and loved your brother,  
You gave a pitiless woman all your heart ;  
You wrote for her, you mourned a sparrow for her,  
Served like a slave : and suffering made your art.

Some fiery songs, a few soft elegies,  
Perfect—you said you used a pumice-stone :  
Coarse little squibs, a rosy song for a wedding,  
What else you did, it never will be known.

A proud young man of fashion, whom a woman  
    Played with and dropped : nothing remains be-  
        side ;  
Only we know, about a certain year,  
    You went away, out of the glare, and died.

And all your world died after, all the towers  
    Fell, and the temples mouldered, and the games  
Left the great circus empty, and the dust  
    Buried the Cæsars, senators, and dames.

## II

I see you lying under marble arches,  
    Above the bright blue meadow of a bay,  
With certain supercilious gross companions  
    Talking their filth more cleverly than they.

Amusing them, one of them, seeming with them :  
They are pleased to find Catullus of their kind,  
They sprawl and drink and sneer and jest of wenches,  
Pose to you : but they do not hear your mind.

You share debauch, debauch does not distract you,  
Your wine is tasteless, pleasureless your ease ;  
Behind your brutal talk you are cold and lonely,  
Sick of the laughter of such men as these.

And even they at times perceive you moody,  
Bid you cheer up, are vaguely tired of you,  
Damper of pleasure, hypocrite, prig, superior,  
Too cranky and vain to think as others do.

For, suddenly, your answers grow abstracted,  
Empty, or rough ; your eyes go over sea,  
Watching a distant sail that seems unmoving,  
The symbol of some lost tranquillity ;



A silent sail that cuts the clear horizon,  
A warm blue sea, a tranquil, cloudless sky,  
You sit and gaze, and, as you stare, they guess you  
Indifferent though the whole of them should die.

### III

“The poet should be chaste, his verses——” well,  
It wasn’t Lesbia’s view, she did her best,  
Tempting and spurning, to weary and degrade you,  
To callous you and make you like the rest.

Disliking, piqued by, that strange difference in you,  
Contemptuous and curious, she would dare  
And then deny, provoke and then repel you,  
Yet could not make you other than you were.

The soft-pressed foot, the glance that hinted heat,  
The scanty favours always auguring more,  
The haughty, cold indifference, mingling twin  
Frigidities of the vestal and the whore

Still could not ever more than wound, cloud over,  
The eager boy in you she so despised,  
The love of fineness, sweetness, loyalty, candour,  
The innocent country memories you prized.

#### IV

A flower in a garden grew, Catullus,  
Some time you saw it, and the memory stayed,  
One flower of all the flowers you ever glanced at,  
A perfect thing of dew and radiance made :

Emblem of youth, plucked, carried away and drooping,

Out of the garden ; emblem of your lot,  
Perplexed, bewildered, languishing, an alien

Who was born to cherish all his world forgot.

## THE WORLD : 1918

**H**OW curious and lovely and terrible is the world !

I sit alone at midnight working here  
With ink and notebook and a glass of beer.  
The lamp is shaded ; all around the room  
Soft spots of radiance glimmer through the gloom.  
Silent and dark the march of Night and Time :  
I only sometimes count a distant chime,  
Or start to hear the scratching of a mouse,  
Or echoes of old footsteps in the house.  
And suddenly my thought flies out and beats  
Over the river, out beyond the streets  
Till the last ends, by road and empty down  
And valley and wood and small forgotten town,  
All hushed and mingled under night's abyss  
To that lone place where, fifty miles from this,  
Peacefully sleeping in the sleeping farm  
You lie with your children, safe from every harm.

Dark is the land, and dark the farther sea  
Where wakeful warships wander secretly,  
And dark that coast and dark the fields within ;  
But then there comes a zone of fire and din,  
Where very slow and small beneath the night  
Men sweat and labour in the ghastly light  
Of shells and flares and rockets, wait the roar  
Of something that will end them evermore.  
And trembling in the dark men creep to kill  
An enemy that shares their every ill  
With equal suffering. Some may sleep, but none  
May sleep unguarded, till this night is done.  
In all that country men will crouch in fear,  
And hear minutest sounds and quake to hear,  
Till morning light shall come and they will pray  
If die they must, to die in open day.

Beyond are many trains, grinding through dark,  
Laden and long in night's mysterious park,  
Then that remembered plain, the plain, the plain,  
League after league, then barrier hills again :

The Urals dark with rolling hills below,  
Where linger villages that hardly know  
What things we do who are later born than they,  
The children of a more enlightened day.

Caspian, Siberia, Oxus, Samarkand :  
Vaguely I guess at that remoter land,  
Still plunged in sleep, wide rivers, rafts of wood,  
Shaggy black tents and towns of age-old mud.

Yet has the night an end : with gradual sweep  
Day westward moves and wakes the world from  
sleep.

Swift flies the Day, yet thought can fly more fast.  
If I could fly with thought I'd come at last  
To ancient China waking in the dawn.  
Even now she sees the long cool night withdrawn



That here has many hours' dominion still ;  
The morning's glow flushes her every hill,  
And over city and field and desert track  
All day's bright hues are slowly stealing back

And all her labouring myriads ignore  
The fevers of a continent at war.

## THE FALL OVER THE CLIFF

WHY would you climb down the cliff, little  
maid ?

I feared you would fall, I shook  
Till the time came I must let you go  
For the weight, and reeled and took  
Slight desperate hold of the jutting stone  
My shoe on the slippery tuft,  
And saw you down in the dwindling air  
Glide and drift, ah swift,  
Till you touched the little beach of the cliffs,  
Still on the beach you lay.  
The blue roof of a house in the corner  
Stands on the shingle's grey,  
And a man walked out. I prayed for your life.  
“ Breathing,” I knew he said  
As he bent over and saw the broken

Shell of your poor head.  
Even now, O agony,  
O to turn five minutes back,  
For your mother walks, not knowing at all,  
Along the cliff-top track,  
In a muslin dress and a wide straw hat,  
Enjoying the sun and the sea,  
Thinking that life is a pleasant course  
Of even tranquillity,  
And her little daughter, so gay and light,  
Like a thistledown, is lying  
Stunned below, and is lifted up  
By a stranger who knows her dying.

## DESCENDANTS

WALKING alone, along the river bank,  
I find the thought insistent : who will live  
To bear the name I bear, when I am dead ?  
I have three sons, I watch them growing up,  
I find in them some qualities of mine  
And hope they'll share my tastes, however far  
Their occupations may be from my own.  
Them I shall know, bound close by daily habit,  
By flash of eyes, by jokes, by magic of home ;  
Settled or wandering, they will still retain  
Community of spirit with their mother  
And with myself. Yet even these, when I  
Am dead, may do things never dreamed by me,  
Take customs, live in worlds I did not know,  
Hold strange opinions that I did not share,  
Think things, perhaps, it would hurt my heart to  
guess,  
Or, as I sometimes hope, confront the world  
Maintaining all I thought was beauty and truth

With a gay courage that would have swelled my  
pride :

Or they may fade into the common mass,  
Remarkable to none when I am gone,  
And all may marry or all may childless die.

Yet, if the future's dark for these, much more  
Bewildering do I find it to conjecture  
About their sons and theirs. How various  
May be that progeny, artists, engineers,  
Dons, priests, accountants, criminals and tramps,  
And politicians. Letting thought collapse,  
Imagination breed, I see stray forms,  
Pale public-schoolboy, frozen-faced official,  
Broad sailor oilskinned to the flying spray,  
A youth at Epsom faultlessly attired,  
A thin and supercilious schoolmaster.  
Then losing all those bright ephemeral shapes  
I see my generations leading to  
A grave and sunburnt colonising man,  
Sitting in white, a siphon at his side,  
On the verandah of the Rangoon Club,

Conversing : “ No, I seldom read a book.  
My father’s grandfather was Squire, the poet,  
None of my family take after him. . . .  
Quite, yes, I thought you might have heard of  
him. . . .  
For five or six years more, I think, with luck,  
One never knows, the market’s so unsteady ;  
I’d really like to go, before I’m past it,  
And try to find my schoolboy form again.  
I turned out twice for Hampshire. . . . Yes, I  
knew him,  
He didn’t play my year, but just before.  
Wasn’t he in the Cornwalls ? ” . . . all around  
Will spread the vast and variegated world,  
Slow rolling through its light and darkened hours,  
Covered with mountains, deserts, peoples, seas,  
And here and there a few small scattered poets  
Blooming upon experience’s tree.  
But he, not knowing, content to live his life,  
Will never give himself a thought about it.









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